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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE
CHURCH OF St. ANNE, DUBLIN,
On WEDNESDAY the 10th Day of FEBRUARY, 1779;

BEING THE
DAY APPOINTED BY AUTHORITY
FOR A
GENERAL FAST AND HUMILIATION.

By THOMAS LELAND, D. D.

THINE HEART WAS LIFTED UP, BECAUSE OF THY BEAUTY; THOU
HAST CORRUPTED THY WISDOM, BY REASON OF THY BRIGHTNESS.
I WILL CAST THEE TO THE GROUND; I WILL LAY THEE BEFORE
KINGS, THAT THEY MAY BEHOLD THEE.

Ezek. ch. xxviii. ver. 17.

L O N D O N :

Printed for N. CONANT (Successor to Mr. WHISTON), in Fleet Street.

M.DCC.LXXIX.

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

CHURCH OF ST. ANNE DUBLIN

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING FEBRUARY 1851

BY THE

REV. J. J. L. J. J. J.

FOR

GENERAL ASSISTANT TO THE HUMANITY

BY TWO LAYMEN, D.D.

THESE SERMONS WERE PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. ANNE DUBLIN
ON WEDNESDAY MORNING FEBRUARY 1851
BY THE REV. J. J. L. J. J. J.
FOR GENERAL ASSISTANT TO THE HUMANITY

L O N D O N

Printed by M. Gwynne (Successor to Mr. Whitcomb) at No. 1, St. Paul's Church-yard

MDCCCXLI

EZEKIEL, chap. xxviii. ver. 17.

THINE HEART WAS LIFTED UP, BECAUSE OF THY BEAUTY ; THOU HAST CORRUPTED THY WISDOM, BY REASON OF THY BRIGHTNESS. I WILL CAST THEE TO THE GROUND ; I WILL LAY THEE BEFORE KINGS, THAT THEY MAY BEHOLD THEE.

IN the solemn hour of humiliation, when through the whole extent of these realms, we are all with one voice to implore the divine mercy, our reflections, if ever, should be serious and devout. We are too well instructed to imagine that a formal compliance with authority, an exterior of contrition however decently composed, or any slight impression of our unworthiness, or any transient and ineffectual sorrow for our offences, can be accepted by him who “ trieth “ the reins and the heart *.” If our present devotions are no more than these, let us proceed no further in the abominable sacrifice, for “ it is not such a fast that God hath chosen †.” In the service of this day, we have heard it disclaimed in the utmost force and fullness of expression.

But whether we are to be awakened to devout attention, or whether the impression of our present duty needs only to be assisted and enlivened, I know no object worthier our present attention, than some affecting instance of God’s dealing with the children of men, and of the ways of his adorable providence, in confounding the presumption, and punishing the perverseness of a simple people. Such

* Psalm vii. 9.

† Isaiah lviii. 5.

is the tremendous object presented in the text. Let it be attentively considered: and the instruction to be derived from it will be found obvious and important.

History bears its evidence to the greatness of this people, on whom ye have heard the sentence of destruction pronounced with such solemnity. And it is described by the Prophets in terms of the utmost magnificence.—TYRE, “the crowning city, whose merchants “are princes, and whose traffickers the honourable of the earth* :” who “heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire †.”—“Strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which caused their “terror to be on all that haunt it ‡.”—“Merchant of the people for “many isles,”—whose “builders had perfected her beauty § :”—into whose bosom distant nations poured their vast confluence of wealth.—The East supplied her luxurious indulgences; and from the West was she “replenished and made glorious ||.”—“Every precious stone was her covering ††.”—Her “song” and her “harp,” and every instrument of delight, and every splendid and every exquisite gratification was “prepared in her.” Her abundance, yet unexhausted, “filled many people; and kings were enriched with “the multitude of her riches ‡‡.”

And this wealth and splendour were naturally attended by arts and refinement, speculation and knowledge. From early days was Tyre distinguished by philosophical researches; and from her torch, the neighbouring people caught, and diffused the flame of science. Commercial knowledge was her strength; and political wisdom her peculiar boast.—“Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty §§,” saith the Lord. She modelled her political constitution, she improved, she compleated it, fixed her seal of approbation

* Isaiah xxiii. 8. † Zech. ix. 3. ‡ Ezek. xxvi. 17. § Ezek. xxvii. 3, 4.
 || Ezek. xxvii. 25. †† xxviii. 13. ‡‡ xxvii. 33. §§ xxviii. 12.

on the all-accomplished frame ; and pronounced it perfect in excellence, beautiful in arrangement, and wisely and wonderfully adapted to the protection of her people. So that, agreeably to these notions of her own consequence, the Prophet compares her to an object of the utmost reverence and magnificence, one of the Cherubim placed in the sanctuary, in the midst of gold and glowing gems, spreading abroad the majestic covering of its wings.

But mark the intoxicating influence of this splendour and prosperity. The “heart” of this people was “lifted up, because of” their “beauty *,” their fair and flourishing condition ; and this even to an hideous degree of pride and self-sufficient confidence. “Thou “hast said,” (such is the word of the Lord to her prince, the representative of the whole state,) “I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, “in the midst of the seas.”—I am the mighty one, and there is none to dispute my dominion, or to controul my power. My arm hath wrought it, and my wisdom hath established it.

And iniquity and oppression were the offspring of this pride. “By the multitude of thy merchandize,” saith the prophet, “they “have filled the midst of thee with violence †:”—and “thou hast “defiled thy sanctuaries,” the seats of thy glory and authority, “by “the multitude of thine iniquities ‡.—Thou “wast perfect in thy “ways from the day that thou wast created §.” The original character of this people was marked with virtue and integrity. But these honourable distinctions were effaced by rapacious avarice, by frivolous vanity, by sensual pleasure, by the long train of depraved affections attendant on enormous wealth.

And with the depravity of their hearts, the wisdom of this people, that wisdom which they boasted, became depraved and corrupt. Their philosophy flattered the pride and self-sufficiency of man ; or

* Ezek. xxviii. 28, 19.

† Ver. 16.

‡ Ver. 18.

§ Ver. 15.

taught him to deny the superintendence of the HIGH and HOLY ONE; to ascribe all this harmonious order, and majestic frame of things to chance; depriving virtue of its most animating motives, and disarming those terrours which ever should attend on vice. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that her political wisdom also must have been vitiated by the pride of prosperity. The splendid and elevated, whether in public or private life, communities or individuals, are tempted to forget that equality in which God hath formed all his creatures, and hence to reason on the rights of others and their own, with partiality and predilection to themselves; to regard the present blessings of Providence, as their own peculiar and exclusive privilege; and to deny to others what they themselves acknowledge to be essential to man's happiness. And their pride, thus dictating to their reason, naturally rendered them what the Prophet calls "the pricking brier, and the grieving thorn, of all that were round about them *."

But whatever were the effects of their insolence and blindness, in general we know that they must have been abominable, from the sentence denounced against this offending people.—"I will make thee a desolate city †."—Thou "shalt be built no more."—"Thou shalt never be found again," but "become a barren rock," and "a place to spread nets upon ‡."—And the traveller of present times beholds the dreadfully exact and literal accomplishment of this sentence. A few miserable habitations of those who spread their nets have at this day usurped the seat of splendour and magnificence, the glory and the terrour of the antient world.

Again,—the destruction of this people was for tremendous example.—"I will cast thee to the ground; I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee §:"—that the great ones of the earth,

* Ezek. xxviii. 24.

† xxvi. 19, 21.

‡ xxvi. 4, 5.

§ xxviii. 17.

beholding

Beholding the fall of the exalted, might stand in awe, and listen to the admonition of this affecting spectacle; ‘be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the proud and the oppressor, take heed that he also spare not thee.’

For this purpose it is, (as we are repeatedly assured) that the providence of the Almighty ordereth the affairs of nations; that his arm is stretched out to “purge away their dross*”; that “the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up†”; that he may remove the veil, and dispel the cloud which hides the divinity from the eyes of the earthly-minded, in the usual course of their pursuits; that by his visitations he may strike terror to the heart of the inattentive and secure, check the dangerous career of insolence and oppression, and make the exalted feel that “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men‡.”

Were the instances of such superintendence found only in the Jewish nation, we might be told that this people were governed by extraordinary interpositions, from which we can deduce no consequences with respect to other societies. And yet we find the most fearful denunciations against this people, closed with a general sentence on every offending people under heaven. “Wheresoever the carcase is” saith our Lord,—in whatever place or nation the Jewish corruptions may prevail, and the objects of God’s wrath be found,—“thither will the eagles be gathered together§—there will be found the ministers of God’s justice and of his “fury poured out||,” as surely as the bird of prey darts on its appointed quarry.—And when we see this awful declaration confirmed in God’s word, by various instances of his righteous judgments, extending over various societies,

* Isai. i. 25.

† ii. 12.

‡ Dan. iv. 17.

§ Math. xxiv. 28.

|| Jerem. iv. 20.

planting and plucking up, according to the secret order of his providence; what are we to conclude, or what instruction should we deduce from the things written for our instruction, but that momentous truth, at this day to be received with fear and reverence, that in these latter times “his hand is not shortened *;” but that in his justice as well as in his mercy, he is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever †?”

Or if there be creatures so infatuated, that they will not discover the great ruling agent in the course of worldly events, it is now no time to encounter their perverseness. We know that nature, and the causes and effects of nature, are no other than the works of the Lord, appointed and directed to the purposes of his wise and gracious providence. We know and are assured that the winds are his messengers, the fire his minister; that he saith to the “sword go through the land ‡,” that he “killeth and maketh alive §,” that he “bringeth down them that dwell on high, giveth power to the faint, and encreaseth strength to them that have no might ||;” that “the hearts of kings ††” are in his hand, and “the madness of the people” under his direction and controul.

Thus persuaded, and thus instructed by the declarations and examples of God’s wrath on the offending, can we of these nations hesitate a moment to acknowledge, that at this day the judgments of the Almighty “are in the earth ‡‡?” Do we believe his word, and can we deem this the language of superstition? Can we be contented to confine our regards to the wretched objects that immediately surround us? to enquire, to speculate, to reason upon public events? to trace them to these sources, to these devices, to these

* Isai. lix. 1.

† Heb. xiii. 4.

‡ Ezek. xiv. 17.

§ Isai. xxvi. 5.

|| Isai. xl. 29.

†† Prov. xxi. 1.

‡‡ Isai. xxvi. 9.

counsels? to arraign or to defend the supposed authors or occasions of our distress? Alas, we have heard too much of invective, accusation, and contest. "How long, O Lord, holy and true*!"—shall internal dissention rage for ever, and our own infatuations fill up the measure of thy wrath?—We, my brethren, are, for the most part, happily removed from the storms of public contention. The leaders and exalted agents in our national transactions may be distracted, and agitated, and inflamed. But we have leisure, and are, I trust, disposed to hearken to "the rod and him that hath appointed it†," with a composed and devout attention. And manifest are the marks of his displeasure; and powerful the voice of his admonition.

His wonders of old time should be recorded in our hearts; and his blessings to these nations held in everlasting remembrance. He rescued, he defended, he directed us, he granted us the blessings of a free and equal government, and the inestimable enjoyment of pure religion; he drove back our enemies, he enlarged our borders. Britain was the joy of the whole earth. People the most distant bowed before her: nations the most opulent did her service. She was "replenished and made glorious." But thou, O Lord, hast again hidden thy face, and we are troubled! The arm of the child is lifted against the parent, and they of our own kindred and language have turned their eyes from "the rock whence" they "are hewn‡." War, and clamour, and animosity, are our portion: in our councils division, in our streets complaint, in our houses mourning; hunger and nakedness (here more especially in our own afflicted borders) clamouring for relief; poverty and calamity uttering their piercing cries; hideous impatience for rapine and bloodshed; the cruelty of despair, the blind rage of envy; the melancholy ne-

* Rev. vi. 10.

† Micah vi. 9.

‡ Isaiah li. 1.

cessity of public justice, the outrageous defiance of its utmost severity; the perpetual dread of violence, and life of terrour and suspicion and anxious precaution, as if we had no civil union, no laws for our protection, as if this country were driven back by her distresses to the barbarity of antient times, and the impatience of her children were ready to renew the days of outrage and desolation.

But not to dwell on the peculiar visitations of our own unhappy land, let us extend our views, as our affections should be extended, to our fellow-subjects.—We know, and it is not the voice of faction which now calls us to acknowledge, with what confidence in the arm of flesh, we scoffed at the first appearance of hostility in the revolting colonies. Too nearly resembling the great city described by the Prophet, we seemed to “set our hearts as the heart of God*.” Who could resist our might, or who could question our jurisdiction? The spirits of the rebellious were to melt as wax, and the presumption of the gainfayers, at our approach, was to die within them. We called them weak; we felt them powerful: we talked of subduing; we found resistance and defiance. In our pride we dictated submission; with equal and perhaps no less dangerous pride, they renounced all connexion. Here, our mighty men could boast but of some imperfect advantages; there, our menaces were confounded, and our vaunting turned to disgrace. We looked for success, and behold a snare; for victory, and the mercy of our adversaries was our refuge. Another enemy watched the moment of our distress, devised how we might be brought low, prepared, avowed her hostilities, issued to the contest, shrunk from our assault, and boasted of victory. While our foes exulted, we were troubled: our painful anxiety could not be concealed. And if our native coasts have not been invaded, we have dreadful and devouring enemies in the midst

* Ezek. xxviii. 2.

of us ; dissention, and clamour, and jealousy, and mutual accusation ; corruption and profligacy beyond the example of former days ; obstinacy and indifference, and unrelenting defiance of God's righteous judgments.---Such are " the signs of the times*."

But when we speak of national corruption, shall we not be told, with triumphant scorn, that this is the formal language of our place and profession, the endless repetition of an exhausted topic, easy to be resumed, but disgusting to the judicious and refined ?---Corrupted is the judgment, and contemptible the refinement, that reject the voice of truth and freedom. In this place, and on this occasion, shall the minister of God's word fear to offend the fastidious and affected ? to provoke the pride not yet subdued, or to encounter the scorner who " heareth not rebuke†?" Shall he, who is to bear testimony against every transgression, speak " smooth things‡," to the dissolute excesses of our lower orders, to the indifference and insensibility of their immediate superiours, to the prevailing defiance of every religious motive, and contempt of every sacred truth, the scorn of every moral principle, and the licentiousness so headstrong, and so shamefully undisguised, which have rendered the exalted of our people vile in the sight of God and man ?

But the strongest descriptions of our danger, and the severest representations of our guilt, that at this hour are heard in any of our religious assemblies, cannot mean to insult our distress, or to denounce the fulness of God's inevitable wrath against us. There is no authority to cry out in the inspired language, " Yet forty days " and Nineveh shall be overthrown§." And in vain is the word of exhortation sounded in our ears, if there be no hope, no expectation, but a fearful looking-for of judgment, temporal and eternal. No,

* Mat. 16. 3.

† Prov. xiii. 1.

‡ Isai. xxx. 10.

§ Jonah iii. 4.

my Brethren! The power that raised, can allay our storms, the goodness that delivered may again restore us, and the long-suffering that hath spared may still lead us to repentance. Impiety and iniquity have been our chastisement; but, enormous as they may be, God forbid that they should become our destruction! As individuals, the things which belong to our peace are not yet hidden from our eyes. As a people, we trust, (and O that this trust were fixed on the firmest basis!) that God hath not yet utterly taken away from us “the stay and the staff, the mighty man, and the man of war, the prudent, the counsellor, and the eloquent orator *.”

Let us even indulge the hope, that disappointment and distress have been our instructors; and that at this day some promising indications of a moderate and equitable temper may be found among us. We seem to feel and confess that the issues of war are precarious. The first sudden rage of indignation and disdain hath subsided; and the devices of our counsellors have been to restore and conciliate, and to re-establish peace on terms of concession and compliance. We have seen the first dawnings of a disposition “to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free †.” The burden of this our country, which hath sustained its burden without repining, and scarcely with complaint, hath been viewed, not without a kind regard. It seems to be acknowledged, that equity and policy call loudly to invigorate this part of the empire, whose vigour hath been miserably exhausted by the present quarrel; and by a reasonable and necessary extension of our commerce to reward our attachment, and enable us to indulge our affection to the parent-state, by an effectual assistance in time of need. And blessed be the advo-

* Isai. iii. 2. 3.

† Ch. lviii. 6.

ates for so generous a policy! and blessed be those who are so wise and so just as to support it!

But whatever may be hoped from those in station and authority; should their influence and example be directed to diffuse a general spirit of equity and moderation, of humbleness and singleness of heart; should they determine wisely, and labour zealously, to stem the torrent of corruption, and to support the cause of God; still, let it be duly weighed, that national reformation, and all its attendant blessings, are derived only from the united efforts of every individual. Nor is there an individual among us, of whatever order or condition, who is not bound to lay this seriously to heart. Public distresses are the warnings of an all-gracious parent, not to nations only, but to each particular, recalling him from the error of his ways, that in the great day of retribution he may be able to stand before the Son of Man. He then who contemplates the dispensations of the Lord, and his wonders of old time, who considers the present tokens of his displeasure, and professes to humble himself before that Majesty he hath offended, must approve the sincerity of this humiliation, unless he obstinately embraces the portion of the hypocrite. Let him “turn to him that smiteth;” and he shall find the bitter waters of calamity at once made sweet and salutary.

We now prepare to offer up our supplications to the throne of grace, that God would ‘take from us all hardness of heart, all neglect of his ordinances, and contempt of his word; and endue us with a spirit of piety and devotion, a spirit of justice and temperance, of humility and charity, and of all other graces which adorn the Christian profession.’—If this be not the petition of a deeply contrite heart, how should the mocker of the Almighty tremble at his abominable presumption! He cannot say,

‘I was not duly attentive, I did not consider the full weight and consequence of this petition :’ for he is now warned of its solemn import, and the disposition with which it should be uttered. Let not then even our “prayer become sin*.” That “accursed thing †,” which is harboured in the breast of every one among us, must be put away. Let it lie no longer rankling to our destruction; let it be expelled and excluded.

They who hear me this day, I trust, have not imbibed the full infection of our national vices. God forbid we had here to encounter the hardened defiance and profligate contempt of every moral and religious principle ! Many among us are distinguished rather by inattention and indifference, than by a deliberate rejection of God’s law. But their inattention must be obstinate indeed, and their indifference horridly obdurate, if they resist the forcible denunciations of God’s wrath, as well as the affecting invitations of his mercy. Self-enjoyment, and dissipation, and pleasure, principally criminal in its circumstances and excess, may have hitherto seduced us. In the day of prosperity it might be deemed an over-righteous rigour, to inveigh against the curious adornments of the person, the studied elegance of our dwellings, and splendour of our societies. But such pursuits are more hideous than frivolous, when the storm of general calamity cannot suspend them; when it is loud and dreadful amidst all the uproar of vice and folly; when it no longer threatens at a distance, but hath burst with its full fury upon our own heads; when, in every part of our own afflicted country, ten thousands and twenty thousands howl for the calamities of war in hunger and nakedness; when this City, the seat of what We call opulence, sitteth “as a widow” suffering the daily “loss of children ‡,” and

* Psa. cix. 2.

† Josh. vii. 13.

‡ Isai. xlvii. 8.

tortured with the cries of those who have not yet sunk under the oppression of poverty and despair.

Is this a time for self-enjoyment, for gaiety and pleasure? for careless indifference, and wanton security? Within, and without us, and on every side, are our instructors. They recall us to serious and solemn attention, with a voice loud and forcible, like “the noise of many waters *.” If our hearts be not as the rock, and every social and religious affection utterly extinguished within us, let us not resist the awful admonition. Let us “break off” our “sins by “righteousness, and” our “iniquities, by shewing mercy to the poor †.” Far from striving with our Maker, let our striving be for his gracious benediction. So shall everlasting joy be our inheritance, and our portion in this life, peace.

And for our “brethren and companions’ sake ‡,” for the sake of those endeared to us by every bond of affection, “because of the “house of the Lord” and the free enjoyment of that holy light of religion not yet extinguished in our land, let us seek the good, and pray for the peace of our Jerusalem. For hereunto are we called by our Christian profession. And that gracious Being, who is slow to anger, will hear the prayer of those who truly turn to him. He will answer, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not “dismayed, for I am thy God §.” “Every one shall help his neighbour, and every man say to his brother, be of good courage ||.” We shall have “counsel and strength for war ††.” And when the unnatural alliance formed against us shall prove the reed of Egypt, and wound the hand that grasped it, “the envy of Ephraim” (let us not resign the hope) shall, “even yet, depart, and the adversaries of Judah be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and

* Ezek. xliij. 2.
|| Ver. 6.

† Dan. iv. 27.
†† xxxvi.

‡ Psa. cxxii. 8.

§ Isai. xli. 10.

“ Judah.

“Judah shall not vex Ephraim * :” the separated shall unite, and the discordant become reconciled: the enemies of peace shall be confounded, the pride of the gainfayer brought low, and brethren dwell in unity together. And in the mouths of all his saints, God shall put a song of thanksgiving.—“O Lord, I will praise thee: “though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, “and thou comfortest me †.”

If creatures, polluted and corrupted as we are, can presume to lift our eyes to thy mercy-seat,—Grant this inestimable blessing, thou God of mercy! To our earthly sovereign, and to all who stand near his throne, to all of station and authority, to all entrusted with the public interests, grant a full portion of thy assisting spirit, that “spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, “of knowledge and fear of the Lord ‡!”——And to all thy people grant, that “the course of this world may be so ‘peaceably ‘ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee ‘in all godly quietness,’——even to that day, when strife and war shall cease, when God shall wipe away all tears, and sorrow and crying and pain shall be no more, and death be swallowed up in victory, through Christ Jesus our Lord!

* Isai. xi. 13.

† xii. 1.

‡ xi. 2.

F I N I S.

Lately published—A new Edition of DR. LELAND'S Sermon, preached before the UNIVERSITY of DUBLIN, on Friday DECEMBER 13, 1776, being the Day appointed for a General FAST and HUMILIATION.

